

From the Directors' Chairs

Consumer Services Review – A View from the Trenches

In the last issue of Collaborative Adventures, we highlighted the process of developing the protocol for the Indiana Consumer Services Review. Working with consultants Dr. Ivor Groves and Dr. Ray Foster of Human Systems and Outcomes (HSO), TA Center Co-Director Dr. Vicki Effland, along with family advocates and leaders from Indiana child serving systems, helped develop the protocol used to review where we are and where gaps exist in the children's mental health system. A similar effort and protocol were developed for reviewing adult services. These protocols will be available on the DMHA web site soon.

The initial Consumer Services Review (CSR) to be completed in central Indiana in early May was on a fast track. A representative from each mental health center, TA Center co-director Janet McIntyre, a NAMI representative, and representatives from DMHA rounded out the roster of trainees to become children's services reviewers. What follows is Janet's account of the intense and demanding days of training and reviewing in April and May.

Whew! What a journey it has been...On April 18 and 19, thirty people from all over Indiana gathered at Larue Carter Hospital's Stamper Center in Indianapolis for a very fast-paced two days of training by Dr. Ray Foster and two other consultants from HSO. After receiving an orientation to the CSR process and protocol, we worked hard on a complicated sample case, and endeavored to align our ratings over a broad range of indicators to assure reliability and consistency across raters. We learned a tremendous amount during this intensive training, but wondered how effective we might be when faced with the "real thing" for the initial round of reviews in just a few weeks – overwhelmed, yet excited described how I felt!

Soon I learned that I would be one of the reviewers during the week of May 8. During the week, we reviewed nearly 60 adult and child cases in central Indiana, each taking an entire day. Mental health centers were charged with scheduling interviews throughout the review day with service providers, family members and consumers (both children and adults), and others involved in the lives of clients, such as teachers, probation officers and child welfare case managers. Each interview day began with a review of records in order to become familiar with the case. We did our best to make it clear to all involved that this was not an "audit" of records, but just a way of "getting to know" the key people before we actually talked with them. We interviewed children, caregivers, teachers, administrators, therapists, and case managers to get a sense of how the mental health and addiction system is doing on a number of indicators – from safety and permanency to academic status and progress, to changes over the past six months in relationships, symptom reduction and school progress. Finally, we addressed questions about system performance in areas like teamwork, planning, and the use of unique/flexible resources.

Each long day was filled with interviews, completing profiles called "roll-up" sheets to be faxed to HSO, giving feedback to mental health center staff, and planning at night for the next day's interviews. On Friday morning when all the reviewers, HSO consultants, and DMHA staff met for a wrap-up session, the excitement was palpable. I think we knew we had been a part of a new and dynamic way of looking at how we provide mental

health and addiction services in our state, and were challenged to begin the process of transformation to improve our system.

This story would not be complete without kudos to Gina Eckart, Assistant Director of DMHA, and the Indiana leader who drove the CSR process. From protocol development, to scheduling training and reviewers, to helping centers understand the process, to assistance of all kinds on the review days, Gina was unflappable and always ready to help. When asked how the week went, Gina says, “I couldn’t be more pleased with our first review week. I want to again give many thanks to all the consumers, family members, providers, focus group attendees, and reviewers for their hard work and dedication to this learning and growth opportunity!” Additional praise should be heaped on central Indiana mental health center staff members, for carrying out their role as recipients of this first review with a wonderful approach to the CSR - wanting to learn and improve their services for adults and children alike.

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